

AF FORM 112—PART I

APPROVED 1 JUNE 1948

COUNTRY GERMANY		REPORT NO. 51A-10623	(LEAVE BLANK)
AIR INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT			
SUBJECT Urban Area of VORKUTA			
AREA REPORTED ON VORKUTA, USSR		FROM (Agency) 7050 Air INTSERWG (USAF)	
DATE OF REPORT 8-12 Jul 54	DATE OF INFORMATION From Sep 50 To Dec 53		EVALUATION F-6
PREPARED BY (Officer) J. L. PESER, Major, USAF		SOURCE 226756	
REFERENCES (Control number, directive, previous report, etc., as applicable) (E 3550s) (M-13-54)			
SUMMARY: (Enter concise summary of report. Give significance in final one-sentence paragraph. List inclosures at lower left. Begin text of report on AF Form 112-Part II.)			
I. PREAMBLE: Having been sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment for having worked for German counter intelligence during WW II, SOURCE was transferred to serve his sentence in slava labor camps in VORKUTA (6622N-7008E). He remained there from Sep 50 to Dec 53, working as a coal miner, and for stretches of time as a constr laborer. Info contained in this Rpt, unless otherwise stated, has been acquired by SOURCE's personal observations and experience. Dimensions are approx. II. LIST OF INSTALLATIONS AND POINTS OF INTEREST: Ref is made to Incl 1, this Rpt, a Tracing of SOURCE's Memory Sketch of VORKUTA, on which SOURCE identified the following points: 1. RIVER. Usa river, a 120 m wide, slow, shallow stream flowing in a 300-400 m wide, 10-30 m deep ravine. Natural riverbanks. Unnavigable, except for motor boats. Solidly frozen from Dec through Mar. This river had no significance in the life of VORKUTA. 2. RR BRIDGE. Angular steel superstructure, continuous truss bridge, supported by masonry abutments and a few masonry supports, one of which stood in the water, others on the earthen river shoulders. 200 m long, clearance 10 m. Both approaches on fills. Guarded by MVD sentry. Closed to pedestrian traffic. 3. ROAD BRIDGE. 150 m long, 4 m wide wooden bridge on wooden bents. 2 m high above the water. One way traffic. Wooden railings. This bridge was in place from Apr to (at times through) Oct. In Oct it used to be taken apart, to be re-constructed in the next spring, after the end of the drift of ice. Not guarded. The process of the disassembly and assembly of the bridge was not observed. 4. COAL MINING UNIT. A. PRISON CAMP. Number unknown. About 3,000 male prisoners in a number of wooden barracks. Manpower for the Coal Mine (Pt 4 B). Existed at the time of SOURCE's arrival. Active in Dec 53. B. COAL MINE. Called "Kapitalnaya Shakhta" (Main Mine). 5. THERMAL POWER PLANT. Old, grey stuccoed bldg, 80 x 15 x 20 m, with tall windows, flat roof, six short steel smokestacks from the roof. Enclosed by a barbed wire fence. Provided with RR connection. Coal was brought direct into the bldg, handled by hand work. SOURCE heard in VORKUTA that prior to 52 this plant had four turbines. Two brand new turbines were installed in it in the summer of 52, were put in operation at the outset of 53. Several power lines on wooden poles diverged from the plant in various directions. Power supply provided by this plant was regular; cut offs of power did not occur, but at times the power tension was below normal, which was manifestly presented by the dimness of the lights. Local mines were brightly lighted. Barbed wire fences of the prison camps were provided INCL.			
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with bright electric lights. Looking at the area of VORKUTA at night, from the top of a slate pile, one would see, as SOURCE put it "a sea of light", which included the area of VORKUTA depicted on the Incl 1 and a number of other mines and prison camps located outside of the city limits, to north, north west and northeast of it. SOURCE heard from other prisoners from the Coal Mine # 30, which SOURCE did not observe personally, that the constr of another power plant was started at the beginning of 1953 on a site in the neighborhood of that mine. According to what SOURCE heard from local workers, subject old power plan supplied power to the whole region of VORKUTA.

6. FOOT BRIDGE. 150 m long, 1.5 m wide ponton bridge for pedestrians. Protected by rope railing. Put in place every April, removed in Oct-Nov. Not guarded.

7. COAL MINING UNIT.

A. BILLETS. Three single-story wooden barracks occupied by two companies of MVD guards.

B. PRISON CAMP. SOURCE's place of confinement from Sep 50 to Feb 53. Called OLP # 9. OLP are initials of "Otdeleniye Lagerya Punkt 9" (Camp Section, Point # 9). About 3,500 prisoners accommodated in 60 wooden barracks. This camp provided manpower for work in the Coal Mine (Pt 7-B). It existed at the time of SOURCE's arrival in VORKUTA and remained active in Dec 53 when SOURCE left the city.

C. TRANSFORMER STATION. Single-story, brick structure 10 x 5 m. Interiors not observed.

D. COAL MINE. Coal Mine # 8. The drifts of this mine were about to meet with those of the Coal Mine (Pt 9 B). It was planned, that when coal deposits of this mine would be exhausted, the mine would be used exclusively for removal of slate from the Coal Mine (Pt 9 B).

8. COAL MINING UNIT.

A. PRISON CAMP. Several wooden barracks. Number of camp unknown. Relatively small camp providing manpower for the Coal Mine (Pt 8-B).

B. COAL MINE. Coal Mine # 40. A small, almost exhausted mine.

9. COAL MINING UNIT.

A. PRISON CAMP. A great number of wooden barracks. About 4,500 prisoners employed on the constr and later on the exploitation of the Coal Mine (Pt 9,B). Number of camp unknown.

B. COAL MINE. Coal Mine # 40 bis. Opened in Oct 53; brand new coal mining equipment. This was the sole mine in VORKUTA which had a vertical shaft. All other mines had inclined shafts. According to official plan, annual production of coal from this mine was expected to reach 4,000,000 tons.

10. MVD HQ. Separately standing on an open site, two-story brick bldg, 30 x 10 m. Observed from a distance. SOURCE heard from Russian miners that the Central File on all prisoners employed within the VORKUTA region was located in this HQ.

11. DISPENSARY. Two two-story brick bldgs, 50 x 15 m and 60 x 15 m. The largest one for civilian personnel, the smaller for the military. SOURCE heard about acute shortage of medical supplies. Wounds used to be bandaged with paper. TB topped the list of most widespread diseases. Many prisoners suffered from heart troubles. SOURCE stated that it was an established fact that Europeans who lived in VORKUTA developed unusually high blood pressure.

12. SQUARE. The center of the city. "Ploshchad' Stalina" (Stalin Square). Paved with wooden cubes. A monument to Stalin in the middle of the square.

13. COAL MINE. Coal Mine # 4. SOURCE's place of work from Feb to Dec 53. One of the oldest local mines.

14. BILLETS. Separately standing two-story brick house, 25 x 12 m occupied by MVD guards serving the southeastern section of the city.

15. COAL MINE. Coal mine # 3.

16. PRISON CAMPS. Two prison camps providing manpower to Coal Mines (Pts 13 and 15). Both camps consisted of wooden barracks.

A. PRISON CAMP. OLP # 15. SOURCE's place of internment from Feb to Dec 53. 1,800 inmates. Old camp. Active in Dec 53.

B. PRISON CAMP. OLP # 61. 1,800 inmates. Old camp. Active in Dec 53.

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C. SAW MILL. About 200 prisoners from the Prison Camps (Pt 16-A and 16-B) worked in this saw mill on preparation of lumber for mines. Equipment not observed.

17. GARAGE/AUTO REPAIR SHOP. Separately standing single-story, partly wooden partly corrugated sheet steel structure, 100 x 50 m. Guarded by MVD. Manned by civilians. Two thirds of the bldg were occupied as a garage for municipal trucks. One third of it contained an auto repair shop capable of performing medium repairs and overhauling of trucks and engines. SOURCE was in this bldg once. He observed that the gasoline for trucks was stored in two steel circular gasoline storage tanks, located inside the bldg, in one of its corners. The tanks were 3 m in diameter, 3 m high, were filled with gas from drums, gas being pumped over by hand pumps.

18. ROAD PATTERN. City streets were in fair condition, 20 m wide, cobblestone or paved with wooden cubes, provided with sidewalks. Canalization did not exist. Only a part of the streets had drainage ditches. Roads outside of VORKUTA were ordinary dirt roads or crushed stone roads. No new road constr was in evidence during the time of observation. When snow impeded traffic it was simply shoveled aside, lay there till spring.

19. RR NETWORK. SRR RSG from VOLOGDA (5633N-4005E) entered VORKUTA and passed around it in the direction to the Coal Mine # 30 (unlocated). VORKUTA coal mines were served by a number of spur tracks. RR network was not electrified. Although switch houses were there, SOURCE observed that switches were hand operated. Condition of trackage (old rails, wooden ties) was fair by Russian standard, but far below European Standard. Most characteristic feature of local network was the softness of the trackage. The always frozen surface of the tundra thawed up near the surface, while the deeper grade remained frozen. In view of this, the upper soft grade lay like a soft pillow on a hard foundation. SOURCE observed that during the summer months the whole trackage, -rails and ties and the crushed stone cover- undulated for several cm under the oncoming wheels of the car. For sake of prevention of damage from the influence of spring waters, all RR tracks rested on 1-1 m high earthen embankments. However, this did not help. SOURCE observed such sections of the RR network where spring water reached the level of the rails. Maintenance of RR network was continuous and relatively good. Large groups of prisoners would be sent out to clear away snow from the tracks, where traffic was obstructed by the snow. Rolling stock was old, in worn out condition. Locomotives in operation were reconstructed German locomotives type "52", made by the firm Schwarzkopf in BERLIN (5231N-1324E). RR cars were mostly old four axle coal gondolas. Shortage of RR cars was acute at all times of observation. VORKUTA had no RR servicing facilities. Constr of new RR tracks was not in evidence.

20. GOVERNMENTAL BLDG. Located in the middle of a two-story brick block. 60 m long front with a portal entrance embellished with stone columns. Whitewashed. Observed while marching by on the street. Seat of civilian administration of VORKUTA.

21. RR STATION. Old two-story brick house 15 x 10 m.

A. RR YARD. Several RR tracks. One row of single-story wooden storehouses with wooden ramps along the southern side of the yard. No cranes, no RR servicing facilities, making up coal trains. Small scale transshipment activity. VORKUTA depended on import of everything excluding coal, therefore import traffic comprised everything needed for life. Export consisted of several coal trains daily. Daily passenger traffic consisted of one incoming and one outgoing train from and to MOSKVA (5545N-3735E). SOURCE estimated that the number of RR cars present within this RR yard at one time averaged 100-150 cars.

22. SQUARE. Unidentified. Distinguishable by a monument to Kirov, standing at its middle.

23. PRISON CAMP. Number unknown. Penal camp for prisoners guilty of lack of zeal at work. 15 wooden barracks. Manpower for the Coal Mine (Pt 24 B).

24. COAL MINING UNIT.

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A. PRISON CAMP. Number unknown. About 2,000 inmates accommodated in wooden barracks. Active in Dec 53.

B. COAL MINE. Combined mine, comprising Coal Mines ## 9, 10 and 11.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Defense and security measures: SOURCE heard from various people that the area of VORKUTA contained about 60 prison camps, with total population of over 200,000 prisoners. Handling such a huge number of prisoners required great number of MVD guards, who lived scattered by companies, one-two or more companies for a camp. All camps were subordinated to the "Nachalnik lagerey" (Chief of camps) General MVD YAROVANKO. His predecessor, also a MVD general (name unknown) committed suicide shortly after the fall of Berija. In addition to MVD troops there must have been some artillery unit stationed somewhere north of the city. At times SOURCE heard artillery fire from that direction. He also observed in the city small formations of soldiers wearing black shoulder straps. They used to come in the city from southeastern direction. Presence of tanks was assumed, but not confirmed by personal observation of tanks. SOURCE had personally seen in the vicinity of VORKUTA traces of wide caterpillars. Such traces could have been made by tanks only. From Russian workers SOURCE heard that since 53 civilian population was trained in civil defense at special evening and Sunday courses for "volunteers". Two mock air raid alarms were made in 1953, in the evening hours. All lights were turned off, nobody might be out in the streets. Alarms lasted for about one hour. SOURCE heard rumors about setting up AAA positions outside of the city, but saw none himself. Search lights were never observed. SOURCE heard of the existence of no air raid shelters.

Location of local fire station was not observed, but one fire truck was observed a few times, travelling past SOURCE's prison camp.

Fires did not occur. Fire precaution measures at and in the coal mines were thorough, but fire fighting equipment was miserable. Fire extinguishers constituted a rarity. Each coal mine had a fire brigade consisting of prisoners. They did not have to work, were held in readiness in a special barrack at the mine. In case of a fire they had to fight it with primitive tools such as ice bars, pick axes, shovels, pails, one (or two) hand operated fire pump). Fire hoses were in short supply and very much treasured. Presence of hydrants at the houses was not observed. Fire fighting equipment in prison camps consisted of barrels with water, pails, hand tools, and sand boxes.

"Free" population, consisting of former convicts, who had served their term of imprisonment but were not allowed to return to their places of domicile, had the right of circulation within the radius of 10 km. Travels outside of this radius, but within some other radius of unidentified length, required special permit from MVD, requests for which had to be put in well in advance. Every coal mine, every prison camp were surrounded by barbed wire fences. MVD guards, mostly young soldiers, lived a dog's life. Far away from their families, in this desolate, barren, cold and unfriendly region. On duty guard duties, exposed to rain, severe frost, they felt far from being happy. Ordinary guard earned 50 rubels monthly and an allowance of makhorka (crude smoking stuff made of stems of the tobacco plants), which was a measly pay for which he could have neither fun nor purchase elementary necessities. SOURCE heard that guards received food which was hardly any better than that supplied to prisoners. Morale of the guards was on noticeable decline.

While in a slave labor camp "OLP 9" in VORKUTA, SOURCE heard from a driver that approx 30 km north of VORKUTA there was a "camp of silence" (the inmates of the camp did not have to work, but were not eligible for mail privileges). According to the driver, who was an ex-prisoner engaged in hauling supplies to various camps, this "camp of silence" held Americans and British captured in Korea.

Population: The city of VORKUTA numbered about 60,000 inhabitants. It was a conglomerate mass of former prisoners denied the right to leave this region after release from imprisonment. All nationalities of the USSR were represented. The majority seemed to consist of Ukrainians, Balts and Russians. Far less numerous group of population consisted of actually free workers and their families (mostly techni-

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cians and skilled workers), who worked in VORKUTA under two years contract. Their circulation was unrestricted. In addition to their regular wages, each such worker received special "Northern Money" bonus, which reached 3000-4000 rubels per month. This tremendous, by Russian standard, earning, enabled this category of population to live well. They looked well fed and well dressed, which was particularly true in respect to their wives. Only such workers could be admitted in VORKUTA as actually free labor, who had never been arrested before. In VORKUTA SOURCE came across a group of "free" workers, former Germans. They were Germans who had had sentences below 10 years, had served their terms and were released. However, they were not sent home. Russians ordered them to remain in VORKUTA, issued them Russian passports in which the entry "Nationality" was left blank. Officially they were regarded as stateless persons. They were denied the right to write home or receive mail and parcels. When some such "stateless" persons applied to MOSKVA, their applications for return were turned down with the indication that they were stateless and as such had no right of repatriation to Germany.

Conditions of life and work: Prisoners were escorted to and from their place of work, but otherwise worked in mines intermixed with actually free and theoretically free natives. SOURCE knew of such instances when prisoners were group leaders in groups which included free labor. The manager of the coal mine in which SOURCE worked, once said at a workers meeting: "Here in my mine I know no prisoners, no free workers. For me all you are simply workers and as such you all have the same obligations to fulfill work norms and observe the work discipline". Instances occurred when, owing to scarcity of food supplies and consumer goods on sale in the city, free workers provided prisoners with money and asked them to purchase the desired items for them in the prison camp's shop. Such close association was benefactor for cultivation of good, friendly relations between the forced and the free labor.

Throughout the time of observation local population had to stand in queues for everything. In a measure it could be laid to shortages of food and consumer goods, but most of all it was due to insufficient number of shops and out of hand poor supply set up. Soviet planners calculated the requirements of everything on the callous basis "per capita". In the result, - everything was short. Nobody knew what he would be able to get in the shop next day; one day for example, there arrived a large supply of macaroni and noodles, but there was neither groats, nor sugar. All hurried to store up macaroni, well aware that the next supply of this product would not, in all probability, arrive in months. Same applied to other products. This necessitated hoarding up of the product that was available on sale to day, which in turn resulted in rush shopping, created queues. Despite intensive and continuous constr of new residential houses, VORKUTA experienced acute shortage of accomodation facilities. People lived under unbelievably overcrowded conditions. (At various stretches of time SOURCE worked on housing projects manned exclusively by forced labor. To his astonishment, he once encountered in a Russian paper a picture of a group of such houses constructed by prisoners. The newspaper presented them as having been constructed by "Komsomoltsy" (members of the Communist Youth organisation).

VORKUTA had one theater, two movie theaters, a few clubs, which constituted centers of recreation, entertainment and at the same time were organs of propaganda indoctrination. Life in VORKUTA was dull, gray sameness and infinite boredom.

City as such: About 70% of the houses of VORKUTA were brick houses, built of brick made in two brick yards located southeast of the city, manned by female prisoners. About 30% of houses were wooden. The highest house had four stories. The center of the city was densely built up with blocks of houses, farther away from the center the houses were scattered and small. SOURCE did not see so much as one tree, but there were a few small grassy parks. Roofs were covered with thin cement tile. Lumber was imported and scarce. Street car and gas facilities were not in existence. One (or more) bus line connected VORKUTA with its vicinities. The bus line was in 52 strengthened by a few brand new large buses. Availability of running water unknown: SOURCE saw people carry water from street water points, in pails.

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Surrounding site: VORKUTA was situated on a slightly elevated plateau, surrounded by boundless tundra traversed by many shallow ravines, abounded with small knolls and hillocks. Tundra was impassable to any means of traffic, which was necessarily limited to available roads. It was a treacherous morassy plain. Its surface consisted of small mounds surrounded by morassy, hollownesses and pits, often filled with water. One could "go" by jumping from one to another mound. Unexpectedly one or another mound would turn out to be morassy, give way, and one would find himself stuck in the mud. During winters the tundra would be covered with 1 - 1½ m thick blanket of snow and with hillocks of snow formed by snowdrifts.

Not a single sort of corn or vegetable grew in the tundra.

Climatic conditions: Winds were felt at all seasons of the year. Summer lasted from Jun to Sep, was relatively dry and lukewarm. Springs and falls were rainy, with overcast skies. Winter set in at the end of Nov, continued through Mar. Average temperature of winter was about minus 30° C. Frost of minus 25° C was regarded as nothing. Lowest extremity experienced by SOURCE reached about minus 55° C. Blizzards occurred often, especially in Feb. They lasted for two-three days. Civilians did not have to work on outdoor jobs when the mercury dropped below minus 35° C. Prisoners employed on removal of slate had to work at all temperatures. Working at frosts of below minus 35°, prisoners received, a remuneration, 50 gr of pure alcohol per day, per man.

Normal change of the day and the night took place only from Mar through May. Since the end of May to the end of Jul, the sun never set.

From Dec to the beginning of Feb the afternoons were dark, the forenoons were sunless, resembling European dusk.

Airfield: A few km south of the city there was an Airfield, which SOURCE observed from a distance. It looked like the Airfield had no hangars. Military planes were not stationed on it. Flying activity (at day time only) consisted of light traffic of civilian planes and MVD liaison planes - conventional type small slow biplanes.

For Matthew Warren Capt USAF
J. L. FESER
Major, USAF
Commander
7051 Air INTSERON

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